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FROM

Pres. C. W. Eliot

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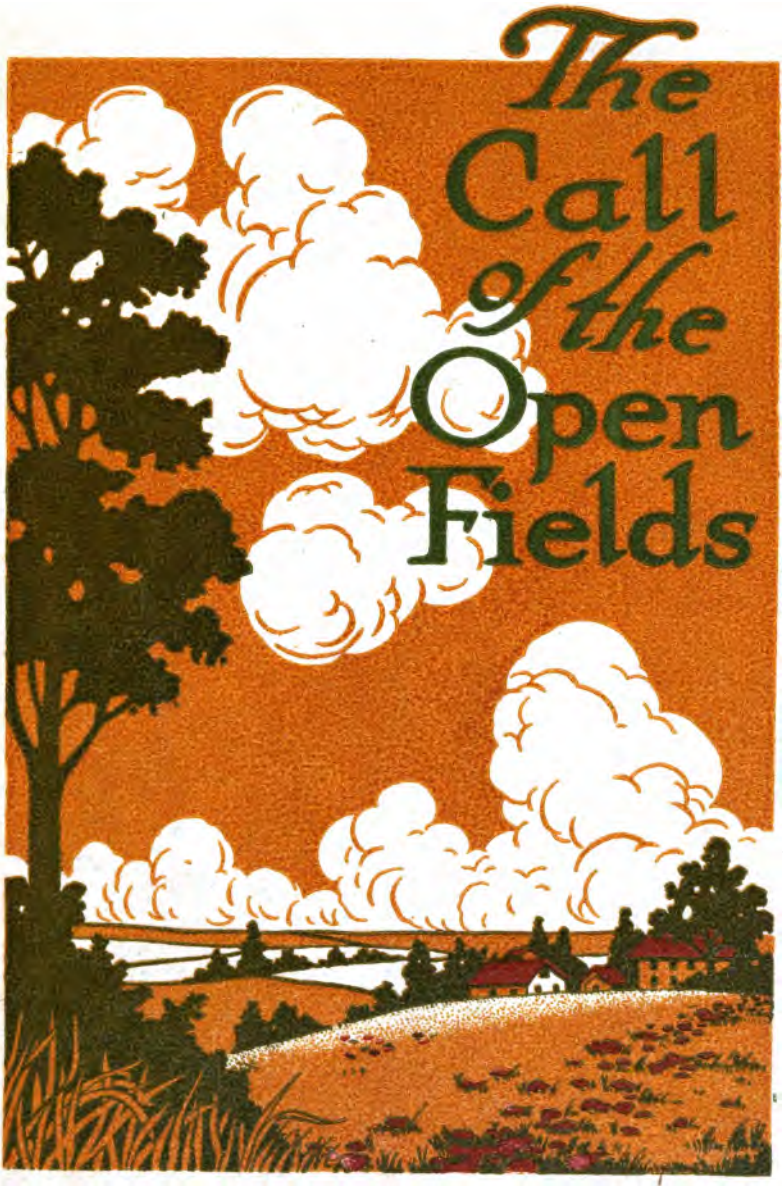

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Sincerely

Emil Zummwalt

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THE CALL OF THE OPEN FIELDS

and Other Poems

By Imri Zumwalt

Bonner Springs, Kansas
Imri Zumwalt, Publisher
1916

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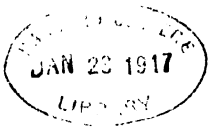

Pres. C. W. Eliot

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PREFACE

Among friends a gift that is the handiwork of the giver always possesses a peculiar value that is dependent in only a small degree on the intrinsic worth or merit of the article itself.

This little volume, published primarily for private distribution among a few personal friends, lays no claim to any special merit, but relies chiefly on the good will and kindly interest of those who have shown in so many ways their friendship for the writer, for whatever measure of appreciation may fall to its lot.

Incidentally a limited number of copies have been produced for sale. If they find favor with the public the writer will be glad, if not he will not be deeply disappointed, for he labors under no delusions concerning the merits of his own work.

If the reading of the pages that follow shall give ever so small a measure of enjoyment or inspiration and ever so little truer a comprehension of the great realities of life to those into whose hands they fall, the writer will be content.

With a few minor exceptions the sketches that accompany the poems are the work of a personal friend, Mr. Abe Gordon of the Kansas City Journal.

Bonner Springs, Kansas, Nov. 1, 1916.

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THE CALL OF THE OPEN FIELDS

The street is full of turmoil and loud, discordant din,
Of greed and lust for power and the reeking stench of sin.

Come out to the quiet places,
To the land of the open sky,
Afar from the thronging faces,
Where sun-lit meadows lie.

The street is full of hatred, an eye for an eye its rule;
It crucifies the hero and crowns the knave and fool.

Come out where the truth is welling
From nature's springs divine;
Come out where the free are dwelling
In a world of peace benign.

Forget the street and its baubles that tarnish ere they're won.
Come out to the open spaces and find a place in the sun.

Come out when the day is sinking
Behind the western height,
When the world is darkness drinking
From the kindly hand of night.

When like some vast cathedral with dome far upward flung
Rises the vault of heaven with starry curtains hung.

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Come bathe your fevered faces
In nature's healing wine
And here in the quiet places
Bow at nature's shrine,

While all around the pillars of the hills eternal rise
In majesty and silence toward the vastness of the skies.

THE CROWN

The crown belongs not to the genius,
Nor to him who sits high in the state,
Not to law-giver, poet, nor painter,
Nor to any the world would call great.

But to him who toiled long at the furnace
Or wrought in the dust of the mill,
Kept faith through it all, and departed
With the heart of a child in him still.

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MANGER AND CROSS

A score of centuries ago, within a stable dark,
Amid the sheep and oxen, one was born,
A peasant's son. His life was like his birth,
Among the lowly. He toiled like other men
And never knew the easy ways of life.

But once upon a mountain top he saw
The world, its coffers rich, its kingdoms vast
Outstretched before him, his to have and hold.
And there renounced them all and went his way
Of persecution and a Roman cross.

Men scoffed at him because for others' sake
He chose Gethsemane's dark path, a crown
Of thorns and death upon Golgotha's hill.
But out from that uplifted cross there passed
A message to the world that swept beyond
Judean hills and far Phoenecian shores,
Resounded through imperial Rome, echoed
From Hymalayan snows to Andes rugged
Sides and rang from ice-bound northern capes
To far antarctic seas, until today
His name is lisped on baby tongues, and prattling
Lips of happy children in all climes,
While from unnumbered throats of bright-eyed girls
And thoughtful women, smooth-faced boys and sturdy
Snburned men there rises, 'mid the gathering
Shadows of the eventide, a prayer
To heaven, in His name sent who died that men
Might live.

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THE DESERT

Morning

A landscape wild and barren
With shadows flying west
As morning's streaming banners
Rise o'er the mountain's crest.

A tide of amber sunlight
Flooding a waste of sand
To where the walls of granite
In golden glory stand.

Noon

A waste of sand and cacti
Stretching far away
To where the hazy mountains
Rise from the desert gray.

An infinite desolation
Under a sky of brass
With never a habitation
And never a blade of grass.

A scorching sun in the zenith
Pouring its burning rays
Down on the sand and sage brush,
Down on the desert and haze.

Evening

An expanse of trackless desert
Under a fading sky,
The warmth of parting sunbeams
On eastern summits high.

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The crimson glow of sunset
  In the hazy, golden west,
A jagged wall of mountains
  Where the day beams sink to rest.

O'er all a purple glory,
  As daylight slowly wanes,
Blending earth and heaven,
  Softening rock and plain.

Night

A dream of death and darkness
  In the twilight's fading bars,
A vastness and a silence
  Under the solemn stars.

And in the gathering shadows
  Thoughts that have no word
Of the wide and silent desert
  And the mountains earthquake stirred.

Of the mountains hory headed
  That have stood while ages fled,
Of the desert vast and silent
  And its secrets strange and dread.

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THE OLD, OLD STORY

When the meadow by the river
  Robes itself in velvet green,
And the red and yellow tulips
  By the garden gate are seen,
And the cows go out to pasture
  Down the narrow, hoof-worn lane,
Where the alder buds are opening
  To the April sun and rain,

When the purple lilac blossoms
  Scent the early morning air,
And the snowballs in the sunshine
  Robes of dazzling whiteness wear,
And the robins and the bluebirds
  In the elms about the lawn
Fill the morning air with music
  From the very peep of dawn,

Memories of other mornings,
  Fresh with dew of other Springs,
Flood my fancy, and a vision
  Of a girlish figure bring.
Of a gown the shade of lilac,
  Lips that shame the garden rose,
Eyes that sparkle like the dewdrops
  Where the morning sunlight flows.

Thus to love does manhood's fancy
  In the spring forever turn,
And the fire of first devotion
  Still with youthful fervor burn,

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And as long as lilacs blossom,
  Roses bloom and dewdrops fall,
You, in youth or age, my darling,
  Shall to me be all in all.

DEATH

Behind the distant, timbered hills
The rugged, snow-capped mountains
  Rear their awful forms
Above the clouds and drifting mists,
Vast, blue and silent
  Swept by mighty storms.

Behind that towering granite wall
An unseen country lies,
  Wide, voiceless and unknown.
Beyond those solemn, glistening peaks
Travelers pass, but none
  Comes back unto his own.

Yet as the sun goes slowly down
Behind those somber ranges
  And the day is gone.
God paints upon their summits high
A mystic halo, in
  The golden hues of dawn.

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THE PEACE OF THE PRAIRIES

I have walked the dim paths of the forest
  Far back from the frequented ways
Where the wilderness wide and unconquered
  In shadowy solitude lays.

I have been in the heart of the desert
  With the tawny earth stretching away
To far distant, low lying ranges,
  Haze curtained, nebulous, gray.

I have dwelt among towering mountains
  That change not as centuries pass,
Untroubled by tempest or torrent,
  Immovable, voiceless and vast.

I have stood on the beach while the breakers
  Came rolling unceasingly in
From afar on the fathomless ocean
  With its distances misty and dim.

But the mountains majestic and silent,
  The forest primeval and free,
The desert's far flung desolation,
  The tireless tides of the sea,

Can ne'er be enshrined so devoutly
  In the innermost depths of my heart
As the wide stretching sweep of the prairies
  And the peace that the prairies impart,

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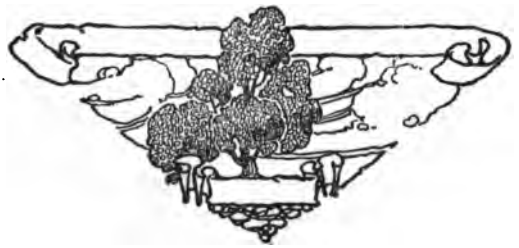
The grass growing green on the hillside,
The breath of the soil on the breeze,
The wheat fields whitening to harvest,
The sigh of the wind in the trees,

The glistening snow fields of winter,
The crystal bows swinging aloft,
The sunsets, not gorgeous nor garish,
But hazy and tender and soft.

For, the scenes of my youth long departed
More wondrous forever shall be
Than forest or towering mountain
Or desert or far swelling sea.

And no matter how far I may wander,
Be it e'en to the ends of the earth,
I shall ever turn backward in longing
To the far away land of my birth.



THE GRAVE ON THE PRAIRIE

In the land of the daisies and goldenrod,
Under the wide arching skies,
A low lying mound of the prairie sod
Marks where my little one lies.

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A DREAM

A strange and vivid dream disturbed my sleep.
I saw a mighty, rolling plain from which
Arose vast clouds of smoke and din of strife.
I heard the shriek and crash of hurtling shell,
The clash of steel, the shouts of charging men
As on that plain the nations, blind with hate,
Destruction hurled and sudden flaming death.

I turned away,
and when I looked again
The battle field was gone and in its stead
I saw a hillside strewn with rocks where sheep
Were herded for the night while shepherds watched.
The night was still, the heavens bright with stars.
Then lo, one distant star grew strangely bright
And nearer drew, expanding as it came
Until a golden, misty cloud it seemed.
The shepherd's fires paled beneath its glow—
Then all the heavens were aflame with light
And throngs of angels filled the sky and formed
A trail of glory to the gates of God.
"Peace on earth, good will to all mankind,"
They sang 'til earth and heaven rang with joy,
And then like some great organ pealing forth
Its mighty tones through vast cathedral aisles,
I heard a voice proclaim, "To you is born

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This day a Savior which is Christ the Lord."
Again the thronging angel chorus sang,
The trail to heaven glowed, the music rang.

The vision passed,
and in its place I saw
Again the mighty rolling plain from which
Arose vast clouds of smoke and din of strife.
The fields of grain were trodden in the ground;
The roads were thronged with hosts of marching men;
The ground was strewn with bodies of the dead;
The earth was crimson with the blood of men;
Cries of anguish were unheard amid
The rattle of a million muskets and
The thunder of ten thousand mighty guns.
And in my dream I heard an awful voice,
"Is this man's answer to the angel song?"

BEHIND THE GATES

Thoughts that are denied expression,
Longings dumb for duty's sake,
Words that never can be spoken
Though the heart in silence break,

Often in unguarded moments
Leap to lips forever sealed,
Send the pulses wildly throbbing
At the gates that dare not yield.

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WE WALKED TOGETHER

We walked together, you and I,
When the day had just begun,
Along a path where flowers bloomed
And nodded in the sun.

We walked together, you and I,
Through morning's laggard hours,
While far ahead rose castles fair
With sunlit walls and towers.

And then 'twas noon before we knew;
The hours hastened on;
The castles wavered in the air,
Then faded and were gone.

But you were there and I was there
And nothing else could matter,
Though clouds should come and winds should blow
And morning's visions scatter.

We walked together, you and I,
Through life's short afternoon
And watched the scurrying hours fly
Toward night that comes too soon.

And now the even time has come
And heavy is my heart,
For just ahead the pathway ends
And you and I must part.

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A THANKSGIVING PRAYER

To him who in his wisdom infinite
The heavens made and all that in them is,
The earth and all that dwell upon its sphere;
Whose great unfolding purpose is revealed
In laughing brook and onward rushing river,
In far extending plain, in rolling deep,
In mighty granite hills, in glowing sun
And twinkling stars that hang in heaven's abyss;
To him who through unnumbered patient ages
Has guided his erring children's progress up
Through toil and pain and blood toward peace
and knowledge
And the gateway of a deathless life.

For the precious privilege of life,
The world and all its countless golden gifts,
The beauty of earth and sky and sea,
The opportunity to think and do,
The power to choose our own free paths and shape
Ourselves our destiny; for the possession
Priceless of immortal souls that never
Need to cringe before the mighty reaper
Nor tremble at the doorway of the narrow
House — we thank thee, Lord. Amen

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AUTUMN MEMORIES

When the goldenrod blooms by the hedge rows
  And the locusts are loud in the trees,
When the autumn haze dims the horizon
  And the odor of fall's in the breeze,
Memories long lying dormant
  In some out of way place in my heart
Awake, and with fingers unsteady
  The curtains of yesterday part.

A schoolhouse stands white on the prairie;
  The wide fields lie warm in the sun;
The children are thronging the playground
  For the season of school has begun.
Among the gay group in the school yard,
  And gayer than all of the rest,
Is one that my eye ever follows,
  The one that my boyhood loved best.
She touches my arm only lightly
  And I thrill as can none but a lad;
She tosses a smile o'er her shoulder
  And sends my heart beating like mad.

That was yesterday, far away yesterday
  With its dreams and its hopes and its fears.
How great and far reaching the changes
  Wrought by the hurrying years.
The schoolhouse is gone and the wheat fields
  Now wave where the children once ran.
The playmates in far lands are scattered,
  The lad has grown into a man.

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Yet whenever a haze veils the distance
And the odor of fall's in the breeze
And the goldenrod blooms by the hedge rows
And the locusts are loud in the trees,
The visions of childhood come thronging,
And among them more clear than the rest
Is a girlish face, dark eyed and dreamy
The face that my boyhood loved best.

THE QUEST OF TRUTH

The shrines of Buddah, dim Confucian altars,
Mumblings of worshipers before the sun,
Whirling of mad dervishes, self torture
Wrought by black skinned natives of the bush,
Infants flung to turbid Ganges tide,
Totem poles of red skinned western savages,
Idols of the far off southern seas,
Pyramids of Egypt, Parthenon of
Athens, Pantheon of Rome, the pillared
Halls of Karnak and the rock hewn temples
Ancient of Chaldean priest and seer

Are but the painful gropings of the race
Amid the darkness seeking light and life,
Hoping by chance to touch the garment's hem
Of Him who flung the stars like polished pearls
Upon the somber pall of primal Night,
Poured out the liquid fire of the sun
And breathed into the world the breath of life.

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THE PRAIRIE FIRE

The prairie stretches mile on mile
  With short and matted grass,
Left sear and yellow by the breath
  Of summer as it passed.

High in the west the autumn sun
  Glows blood red through the haze.
The vast expanse of treeless plain
  No sign of life betrays.

Down from the distant unseen hills
  The restless west-wind sweeps,
And over all the buzzard wheels
  As patient watch he keeps.

Along the prairie's distant rim
  A smoke-cloud pillar curls,
And spreads abroad, and on the air
  A breath of burning whirls.

Ere long the sun is almost hid
  With smoke-wreaths drifting fast.
The tireless west-wind swirls along
  An angry roaring blast.

Great flocks of birds sail swiftly by
  As by some foe pursued,
While all around dart scurrying forms—
  The prairie's startled brood.

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The day is changed to somber night.
  Beneath the black smoke pall
A line of angry leaping flame
  Comes on, devouring all.

The fiend is loose upon the plain,
  A fierce, resistless king.
Wild revel here today he keeps
  And has his fearful fling.

He laughs, he roars, he shriekes, he howls
  As upward from the grass
Great clouds of smoke he heavenward hurls
  And rides upon the blast.

Then on he whirls in mad career
  Across the death doomed plain,
Ahead a terror stricken host,
  Behind, but charred remains.

A vast expanse of blackened earth
  Lies where the grass lands lay.
The tireless bird that wheels above
  Decends and claims his prey.

VAGRANT VERSES

A voice in the twilight
  Gentle and low
Whispering softly
  Of things long ago.

A soul that's undaunted,
  A task that's well done,
A conscience unhaunted,
  A place in the sun.

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MIDSUMMER NIGHT

A sheen of gleaming wavelets,
  A cloud all silvery white,
Timbered hills deep shadowed
  Against the fading light.

The silver turns to crimson ,
  The sky to burnished gold;
The water repaints the picture;
  The hills strange shadows mold.
The light fades, into darkness;
  The moon with misty ray
Shines down upon the water
  Where trembling shadows stray.

A song floats o'er the water
  Like a voice from days gone by,
Then dies away in silence
  Where somber woodlands lie.

A boat is idly drifting
  Bearing a man and maid
Out of the prosy day-world
  To the dream-world love has made,
And through the misty moonlight
  Love's soundless music swells
Borne in from the dreamy distance
  Where life's deep secret dwells.

THE MOUND ON THE HILLSIDE

Where the wild roses bloom on the hillside
  A mound covered over with ferns
Marks the spot where in sleeping or waking
  Forever my empty heart turns.

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THE SCOURGE OF HELL

The scourge of hell is loosed upon the world.
Cities proud in smoking ruins lie.
Profaned are temples reared to the Most High,
And where for ages glowed the storied windows
In the sun, now blank and hollow ruin
Stares upon the world through empty sockets.

Babes cry in vain upon the withered breast
Of mothers slain by slow starvation's hand.
The hopeless widow with her orphaned child
Weeps o'er the ruin of her home despoiled.
The ravished maiden steals away to die
Alone and hide her undeserved shame.

Upon the sea the terror haunted fog
Sends up the choking cry of drowning babes
And men and women wake from peaceful dreams
Of summer lanes and flowers and sunlit fields
To face the sudden horror of in-rushing
Wave, to fight in grim despair for life,
And then go down beneath the chilling foam.

Boys, fashioned in the shape divine,
The immage of their maker, have become
The human sacrifice upon the altar
Of the priests of hate and lie in thousands
On the blood soaked fields reduced to carrion,

While he who loosed the scourge still blasphemes God
And calls upon the Prince of Peace to give
The victory unto his pirate sword
And set him on a Nero's bloody throne.

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THE NAZARENE

There was a man who might have been a king
And ruled in all the earth supreme.
He turned his back upon the offered crown
And chose to dwell with humble, unknown men,
That he might ease the heavy load they bore,
Plant hope and faith in tired human hearts
And lead them up to higher thoughts and lives.

He threw his life away to aid his race
And was condemned at last and sent to death
Like any murderer or common thief,
Yet innocent of any charge of guilt
Save that he lived an honest, fearless life
Denouncing wrong in places high or low.
He died with words of love upon his lips,
Forgiving all his foes and faithless friends.

Men said he was a failure, yes, a fool
To yield a kingdom for a martyr's wreath.
They died, their names and all their deeds are lost.
His name still lives, by multitudes revered
In every land, as deathless as the stars,
And down the centuries still shines the glory
Of far Golgotha and a Roman cross.

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